

## **1995 - 1996 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR POSITION DESCRIPTION AND AM 109 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORMS**

These instructions are provided to assist in completion of the AM 109 Employee Performance Assessment Form and all Position Description Forms. (For organizations participating in the phased implementation of the new performance management system, please refer to the booklet entitled *Performance Management* for instructions.) The performance assessment forms and content are unchanged from last year. The steps of the performance assessment process, from worksheet completion to continuing interaction, as outlined on page 4 of the Performance Appraisal Handbook (1986), are basically the same. However, during the worksheet phase, supervisors and employees should discuss the content of the Position Description to ascertain whether it has changed. This year the *performance assessment writing period* — the period during which the assessments are prepared — is June 1 through August 31, 1996.

Performance assessment and position description forms prepared in the most commonly used word processing programs were sent to all division and program offices two years ago. Organizations may create their own templates, but the wording and format must be the same as those provided.

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

The Position Description is a *concise* and accurate statement of the employee's principal duties and responsibilities and of the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to perform the job. It also contains a *brief* description of the employee's work environment.

**EMPLOYEE NAME** — Be sure that the name on the Position Description is the same as the name that appears on the Employee Information System. Do not use nicknames or abbreviations.

**FLSA STATUS** — Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the employee is exempt or nonexempt under the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the payment of overtime. Reference may be made to the definition in AM 301.02, General Payroll Policies. (See also AM 004, Definition of Terms.)

**EMPLOYEE Z NUMBER** — Please double-check the Z number to verify that it has been typed correctly.

**EMPLOYEE JOB TITLE** — The job title should be the same as that reflected on the last Personnel Action form affecting the employee. Do not use functional titles such as "Principal Investigator" or the program under which the employee was hired. For example, use Staff Research Assistant, not GRA.

**EMPLOYEE'S ORGANIZATION** — Use the group to which the employee is officially assigned. If the employee is on a Form B assignment, use the name of the originating group.

**GROUP-LEVEL MANAGER'S NAME AND TITLE** — This information should be *typed* on this page. It will aid in identifying signatures..

**PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** — Each job duty or responsibility that is critical to the successful performance of the job and is performed on a regular basis should be included in this section in *brief*, clear sentences written in the present tense. For

example: “Designs and constructs test stands to evaluate capabilities of very-high voltage/high-power thyatron switches” or “Provides word processing support for XYZ Group.” Omit duties that typically require less than 5% of time and summarize responsibilities by grouping similar tasks.

The phrase “may perform other duties as assigned” should be added at the end of the list of responsibilities and duties.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES** — In this section, list the job specifications, e.g., specific knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the job. State general educational development required, e.g., “knowledge of heat transfer calculations and stress analysis.” Statements about knowledge or skills normally acquired on the job may be made, e.g., “knowledge of Laboratory administrative policies and procedures.” List any special physical, interpersonal, or analytical skills required by the job, such as ability to lift and/or carry a certain amount of weight, ability to lead in a team environment, or ability to analyze complex computer data. The levels of general educational development and the knowledge and skills normally acquired on the job should be realistic, i.e., stated as minimum requirements and supported by the job duties and responsibilities.

**WORKING CONDITIONS** — Briefly describe the employee’s physical environment. Examples of conditions are noise, cold or hot environments, proximity to sources of radiation, and chemical hazards such as toxic or irritant chemicals, dusts, powders, fumes, vapors, etc. Also describe protective clothing and devices used, such as masks or respirators, hand protection, hood use, face shields, safety glasses, level A HAZMAT suits, etc. For example: “works in a noisy environment with hearing protection.” If conditions are normal, state that they are normal, e.g., “works in normal office environment.”

**DISCLAIMER CLAUSE** — This language is provided on the form and must be included on any templates created in individual organizations. Position descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive lists of all responsibilities, skills, or working conditions associated with the job; rather, they are intended to accurately reflect the principal job elements.

**SIGNATURES** — The signatures of the group-level manager and the employee are required on all forms before they can be filed in official Laboratory personnel records. The same procedures apply for employee unavailability or refusal to sign as apply to performance assessments (see AM 109.25-.27, Performance Assessment). To comply with the roles and responsibilities of the new management positions, group-level managers must review and sign the Position Description. (For further information, please refer to the memorandum and attachments from S. S. Hecker to the Laboratory Leadership Council, dated March 2, 1994, regarding Roles and Responsibilities.) The group-level manager’s signature means that he or she has reviewed and approved the Position Description and that it accurately reflects the principal duties and responsibilities as well as the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to perform the job. The signature of the employee means that the employee has read the Position Description and has had an opportunity to discuss it with the supervisor/manager.

When available, job advertisements and reclassification proposals will be helpful in writing position descriptions. For additional guidance, contact the Compensation and Benefits Group at 5-2020. Human Resources Generalists can help with questions pertaining to position descriptions and performance assessments.

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION — PAGE 1 OF THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM**

A matrix must be used to rate performance. Commentary is not required for factors receiving the fully satisfactory performance descriptor, but is required for all other descriptors.

**REVIEW PERIOD** — The review period for most employees is June 1, 1995 through May 31, 1996. If an employee was not part of the organization last June 1, start his or her review period on the date he or she hired on or transferred into the organization.

**JOB FACTOR** — List the key areas of the employee's job. In addition, various additional institutional job factors may be required:

*ES&H:* Evaluation of performance in environment, safety, and health (ES&H) is required for all employees.

*Property Accountability:* All employees who use and/or have custody of Laboratory property must be evaluated on the factor of property accountability. This factor evaluates the employee's performance in the proper use, control, and protection of government property.

*AA/EEO:* Managers and supervisors must be evaluated on their affirmative action and equal employment opportunity efforts.

*Industrial Interactions:* This factor applies to those employees involved in developing industrial partnerships.

*Performance-Based Management:* This factor applies to all managers and supervisors. It evaluates contributions toward the Laboratory's goal of performance-based management. As a reminder, the standards are

1. Recognizes and rewards good performance. Creatively uses both formal (salary) and informal (praise, giving credit, latitude, job assignment) rewards systems.
2. Deals with poor performers by addressing performance problems in a timely, proactive manner.
3. Recognizes and rewards teamwork.
4. Criticizes and disciplines constructively.
5. Uses training and other development techniques, including mentoring, to enhance individual and team performance.
6. Completes performance assessments in a timely manner.

**PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS** — Performance descriptors are summary phrases that must be used to describe an employee's performance relative to each job factor being considered.

*Exceptional Performance* — The employee's performance was truly exceptional and consistently exceeded the requirements of the job factor for fully satisfactory job performance.

*Fully Satisfactory Performance* — The employee demonstrated a high standard of performance, fully satisfying the job factor requirements.

*Performance Needs Improvement* — The employee's performance needed improvement in one or more important aspects of the job factor to be fully satisfactory.

*Unsatisfactory Performance*— The employee's performance was unacceptable in one or more important aspects of the job factor.

Only when the employee consistently exceeds the requirements for fully satisfactory job performance in a job factor should the *exceptional performance* rating be considered. Normally, the exceptional performance rating is appropriate only when the employee has worked on unusually difficult and challenging tasks with large impact and performed exceptionally well or has gone beyond normal expectations in performing routine tasks. A brief explanation in the written comments section is required to describe why the performance was rated exceptional.

If an employee satisfied job requirements for a given job factor, and if the manager is satisfied with the employee's performance, the employee has achieved *fully satisfactory performance*. Both the employee and the manager should be pleased when performance is fully satisfactory. This rating indicates to anyone who sees the written assessment that the employee is an asset to the organization and to the Laboratory.

The descriptor *performance needs improvement* requires a written explanation in the "Comments" section to detail why the performance was deemed to need improvement. This rating requires a well-conceived Development Plan designed to give guidance and goals for the employee to improve performance.

The *unsatisfactory performance* rating for a job factor serves to notify the employee that performance has not been acceptable. This rating requires sufficient written explanation to describe why the performance was rated unsatisfactory. This rating requires a Development Plan that addresses the unsatisfactory areas of performance, with guidance and goals.

Performance needing improvement and unsatisfactory performance should be addressed not only during the annual assessment exercise, but whenever the need arises, through the liberal use of *interim performance assessments*. Because this performance assessment process distinguishes performance problems from misconduct, use of written counseling, written reprimands, etc., as described in AM 112, Discipline Policies and Procedures, is not appropriate.

**COMMENTS** — Comments are optional for "fully satisfactory performance." Comments or explanations are required for "exceptional performance," "performance needs improvement," or "unsatisfactory performance." Use supplementary sheets if more space is needed. A sentence or two will suffice for exceptional performance;

comments on needs improvement and unsatisfactory performance ratings need not be lengthy, but must describe the performance deficiencies in enough detail that the employee understands where the problems lie.

#### **OVERALL UNSATISFACTORY BOX**

*When the Box Is Checked* — If the employee's *overall* performance is judged unsatisfactory with respect to communicated job factors and standards, this box is checked. This determination is made by two levels of line management with the involvement of any immediate supervisor(s). For line management to check the box, the employee must be rated as unsatisfactory in one or more job factors. Receiving one or more unsatisfactory descriptors does not *require* checking the overall unsatisfactory box; managers must weigh the relative importance of the job factors in determining whether the overall performance is unsatisfactory. However, a single unsatisfactory factor can be sufficient to result in an overall unsatisfactory rating. An *interim performance appraisal* indicating overall unsatisfactory performance may be prepared at any time during the year.

*Required Approvals* — Checking the box normally requires the approval of two levels of line management — the group-level manager and the division-level manager.

*Performance Action Track* — When the employee has been informed that his or her **overall** performance is unsatisfactory, management places the employee on a Performance Action Track of two to six months' duration. The length of the performance action track is determined by the managers and depends on the managers' assessment of the length of time reasonably needed to attempt to bring the deficient performance to fully satisfactory status.

When the employee and manager meet to sign the assessment, the manager must provide the employee with a Performance Improvement Plan that outlines the performance deficiencies, provides clearly written expectations and goals that must be achieved for fully satisfactory performance, states the duration of the Performance Action Track period, and describes any resources that may be deemed appropriate by the managers to assist in improving performance. Additionally, the plan must clearly state that if the employee does not achieve fully satisfactory performance within the time specified, the employee will be terminated on a specified date. The purpose of the proposed termination date is to emphasize the seriousness of the matter, stress the necessity for performance improvements, and clarify to the employee that it is his or her responsibility to make the necessary correction to performance. (The Performance Improvement Plan is attached to the performance assessment, but is a separate document.) Placement on a Performance Action Track is not a disciplinary action and is not grievable under the Laboratory's internal complaint policies. Performance assessments are not subject to review under AM 111, Employee Complaints.

Because the intent of placing an employee on the action track is to achieve fully satisfactory performance, supervisors and managers involved are obligated to meet with the employee at frequent intervals about his or her progress. These meetings and the employee's progress must be documented in a Progress Report. The employee should be able and encouraged to come forward at any time with

information or suggestions about his or her performance. As always, employees can seek advice and assistance from Laboratory resources such as the ESH-2 Employee Assistance Program.

Forms for Performance Improvement Plans and Progress Reports are available from the Employee Relations Group.

*Performance Action Track Advisor/Coordinators* — Although managers make the decision to place an employee on a Performance Action Track, they must seek advice from a Performance Action Track Advisor/Coordinator before placing the employee on the Performance Action Track. These individuals have wide knowledge of Laboratory employment issues. They serve as a point of contact and a guide in handling any ancillary issues and in accessing support services, as well as helping to ensure Laboratorywide consistency in applying the Performance Action Track. To obtain assignment of a Performance Action Track Advisor/Coordinator, managers should call the Employee Relations Group (7-8730).

*Conclusion of the Performance Action Track Period* — Employees who achieve fully satisfactory overall job performance at the end of the period are removed from the Performance Action Track by their supervisor/managers. A new performance assessment must be prepared that indicates that fully satisfactory performance has been attained. The original performance assessment, including the attached Performance Improvement Plan and Progress Reports, remains in the employee's official Laboratory personnel file according to established retention schedules.

Employees who do not achieve fully satisfactory performance within the period receive a Final Notice of Termination. This notice must describe the deficiencies that prevented the employee from attaining fully satisfactory performance. The employee has five days from receipt of the Final Notice of Termination to present to the managers who placed the employee on the Performance Action Track any information concerning why he or she should not be terminated. If the managers do not reverse the decision to terminate, the employee is terminated on the date specified in the notice.

*Appeal of Termination from Employment* — Details of the appeal process can be obtained from the Employee Relations Group.

## **JOB ASSIGNMENT FOR PAST REVIEW PERIOD AND JOB ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT REVIEW PERIOD — PAGE 2 OF THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM**

This section is used as usual to detail assignments, i.e., to state goals and milestones for the past review period and for the forthcoming one. For some nonexempt jobs, the job factors will be essentially the same as the principal job duties and responsibilities found in the Position Description. Normally for exempt jobs and more complex nonexempt jobs, the job assignment will elaborate on the the duties and responsibilities, e.g., will call out specific tasks or job factors for the past and next review periods, along with the performance standards. The job factors or tasks for the past review period should be the same as those listed in the evaluation matrix.

When significant new assignments result in new duties and responsibilities or when a duty or responsibility no longer exists, the Position Description should be updated to reflect the change and sent to Personnel Records for filing.

A reminder of definition of terms:

**JOB FACTOR:** The key areas (normally four to six, not including institutional factors) of an employee's job considered to be indicative of performance and important enough to be specifically evaluated. Examples are "Communication," "Customer Interface," and "Testing and Documentation." For some positions, supervisors may wish to state specific tasks, rather than job factors.

**PERFORMANCE STANDARD:** A statement of conditions that should exist and that can be determined to indicate that the work performed meets stated requirements. Performance Standards are the criteria that indicate what good performance looks like. For example, for Written Communication, some performance standards would be "use correct grammar and spelling" and "express ideas clearly, concisely, and effectively."

#### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN — PAGE 3 OF THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM**

*Development Plans are required for all employees.*

The focus of a development plan for exceptional and fully satisfactory performers is career development. For employees with ratings of needs improvement or unsatisfactory, the focus of the development plan is performance improvement.

#### **EMPLOYEE COMMENTS — PAGE 3 OF THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM**

Employees are encouraged to comment on the performance assessment. A maximum of five pages will be filed in the employee's official Laboratory personnel file.

#### **SIGNATURES — PAGE 3 OF THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM**

After the final performance assessment form has been prepared, and the performance assessment process has been completed, including the employee's comments, both the employee and the group-level manager sign the form. The employee's signature acknowledges that the employee has read the assessment and that an opportunity was given for discussion of its content. If the employee refuses to sign the assessment, the group-level manager should note that fact on the form. Because personnel records are now being scanned, please use *black ink* for all signatures.

Send the signed, completed *original* assessment, along with the signed Position Description only if a new one is needed, to your Human Resources Generalist or Personnel Coordinator. Do not send directly to Personnel Records. Please check the appropriate box at the top of the first page of the performance assessment to indicate one of the following: *position description unchanged*, *position description revised*, or *new position description*. In this way the Human Resources Generalist or Personnel Coordinator can tell whether the package is complete.